

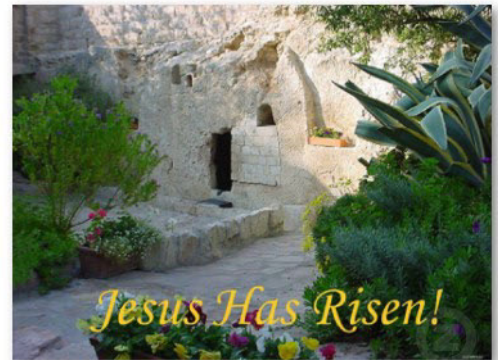


Dear Friends,

In this part of the world we have been plunged into the middle of election fever. For the next few weeks all we will hear on ever extending news bulletins are the merits of one party over against the ineffectiveness of another. Each group is pushing itself to the limits, going to almost any lengths to prove to a weary and rather cynical electorate that it has the answer to all their problems. Promises are being made that, with present resources stretched to breaking point, have not much likelihood of being kept. Even the more private and intimate difficulties, pain or loss suffered by those in leadership in recent years are being used as a sympathy vote to boost a political campaign. Nothing, it seems, is sacred. Everything that can be used is being used; some would say abused. For what? To be in the position of power, a position that will have a honeymoon period of a few weeks, perhaps months before the same unaddressed cracks and wounds of a failing social and political structure open up again. We need to be praying for all the politicians and those who influence public thinking, especially the media, not only in these islands, but everywhere that there might be repentance, that is, that they might see things differently, and that their lived out message would be one of hope and integrity, of justice and of competent compassion.

And if there is confusion and disillusionment over the political scene, how much more so over the Church? For those whose faith has been closely bound up with the institution, in all its branches, these are difficult and bewildering days. Every word spoken or unspoken, every action or lack of action is being scrutinized, debated, judged. Out of a very painful, even anguished scenario for everybody, there can yet be something redemptive. Perhaps this is a refining time for the Church as a whole. We need to be praying for our leadership in every denomination that they and we will not miss this moment, this opportunity to recognize, before it is too late, that we are called primarily to be a servant community. The

virtues of humility, repentance, compassion and a generosity of spirit need to be incarnated once again among the people of God, especially among those who are publicly recognized as image bearers of the Gospel. Perhaps what is needed is a prophetic action that comes from the heart rather than cautious deliberations as to how to move forward. If leadership, clergy and others in positions of responsibility, could be courageous enough, humble enough and wise enough to come out and kneel together, Catholic and Protestant – for we are sisters and brothers in the one family – in repentance and as a sign of a new beginning, that would be the first real sign of hope for the twenty-first century Church of Jesus Christ in this island.



We claim to be an Easter people. That means we are people of resurrection, of forgiveness, of new beginnings and of freedom from the imprisoning fears and caution that have restricted us for so long. On the first Easter morning those who came first to the tomb were wondering who would move the very large stone away from the entrance so that they could enter and embalm the dead body of Jesus. Twenty centuries later is our focus still more that of seeking to embalm a dead body trapped behind the very large stone of our unbelief, our fear, our hidden guilt and shame, and the scandal of our disunity than to

truly take on board the fact that 'He is Risen!?' It is that that changes everything. It is that that transforms us into an Easter people who run from the tomb of yesterday into the bright new day, into the eternal now of 'God with us' carrying with us the outrageous hope that, no matter how things may seem, all is well. The same mighty power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated him in the place of honour at God's right hand can raise up political leaders who will do what is right, who will love mercy and who will walk humbly with their God. That same mighty power can so infuse the media that it becomes a channel, a voice of outrageous hope for a weary world. That same mighty power can refine, redeem and restore the Church to truly be the image bearer of the One who always goes ahead of us, opening up a totally new way for us to pick up the mantle of being the people of God and enabling us as an Easter people to sing with a united voice the ancient yet ever new song of 'Alleluia!' Thanks be to God!

Ruth

RIP



During the last few weeks we have lost, through death, two more dear 'friends' of Restoration Ministries. Honor Hanna had become increasingly frail over the last number of years, but throughout our Restoration Ministries journey she was always supportive and a source of encouragement. We want to assure her brothers Robin and Bill, her sons William and John and the whole family circle of our thoughts and prayers at this sad time.



Liz Reid was a very familiar and faithful face at all our gatherings here at Restoration House. We thank God for her friendship and support. It is good for us to remember that she faithfully travelled every day with us on our 'Journeying with Jesus' programme throughout Holy Week. Her sudden death has come as a great shock to all of us, but especially to her husband Jas and her daughter Jill. In the pain and bereftness of these days we pray for them the Easter assurance of resurrection, of loving comfort and of living hope.

Dromantine Inter-Church Gathering *Companions on the Journey*

- Celebrating 100 years of ecumenical pilgrimage

- How far have we come, how far can we go?

1910-2010

*Two distinguished "Companions" will
address the gathering
(Names will be announced later – watch this space)*

Venue: Dromantine Retreat and Conference Centre
Newry, Co. Down

Date: Saturday 8th May 2010

Time: 1.30pm – 5.30pm

RSVP: Dromantine Retreat and Conference Centre
Tel: 028 (048 from ROI) 30821964
Email: admin@dromantineconference.com

All are very welcome



MONTHLY MEETING

Monday 26th April at 8.00 pm

'An Easter People'

Facilitator: Rev Ruth Patterson

RESTORATION MINISTRIES
4 Thornhill Road
Dunmurry
BT17 9EJ

Tel No: 028 90621867

Email: office@restorationministries.co.uk

Web: www.restorationministries.co.uk